

# Section 1

## The British Isles

### READ TO DISCOVER

1. How has history affected the culture of the British Isles?
2. Why are the cultures of Ireland and the United Kingdom similar?
3. How has the British economy changed over the last 200 years?
4. What issue has caused tension in Northern Ireland?

### WHY IT MATTERS

Since the 1960s many British musicians have helped to shape popular music in the United States. Use [only1.com](http://only1.com) or other **current events** sources to learn about how modern British music has influenced world culture.

### DEFINE

sequent occupance  
famine  
constitutional monarchy  
nationalized

### Locate, continued

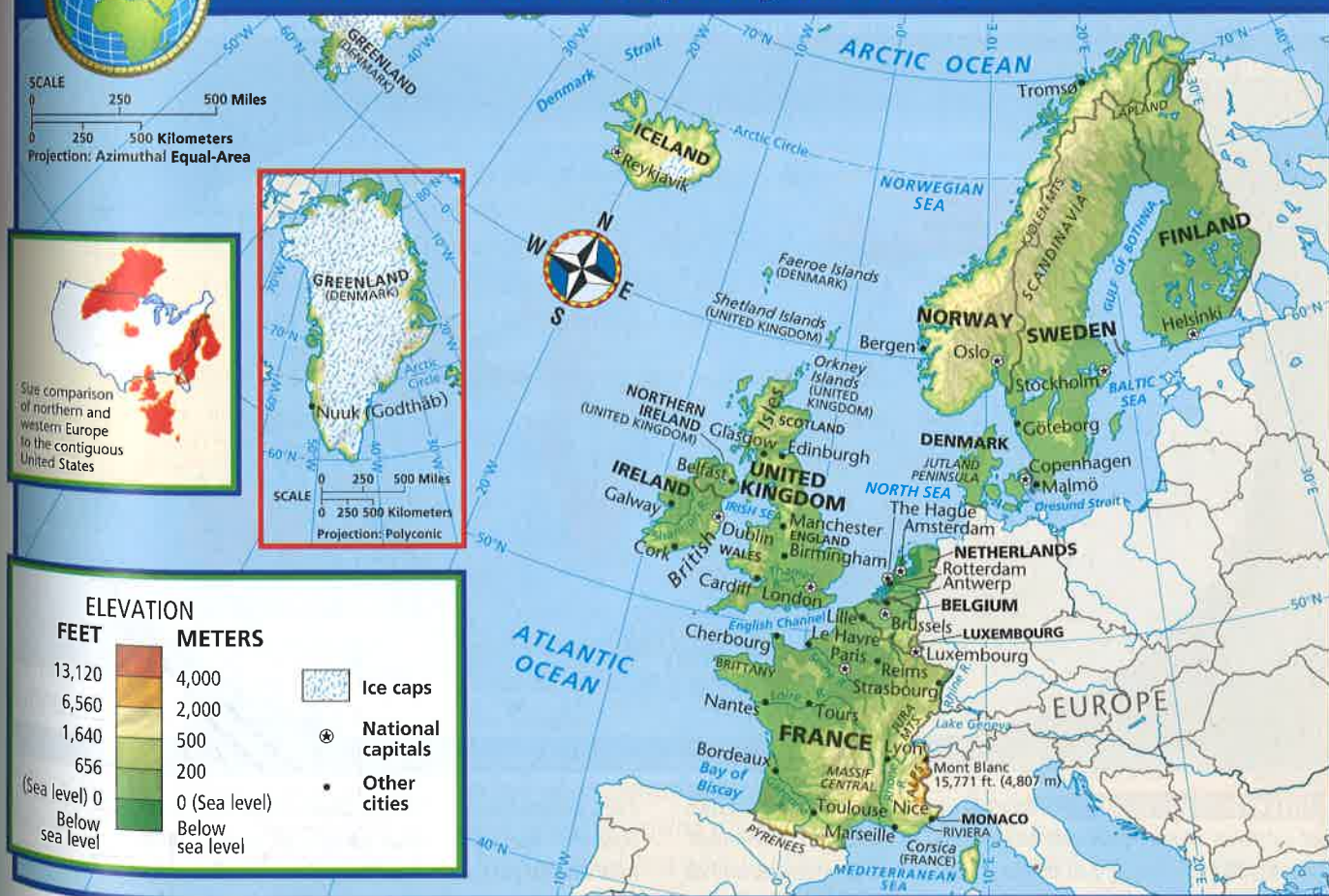
Dublin  
London  
Thames River  
Glasgow  
Edinburgh  
Birmingham  
Belfast

### LOCATE

British Isles  
England  
Wales  
Scotland  
Northern Ireland



### Northern and Western Europe: Physical-Political





### INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

Stonehenge, an ancient complex of massive stone circles in England, was built beginning about 3100 B.C. Modern archaeologists are unsure exactly why Stonehenge was built. **How is Stonehenge an example of sequent occupation?**

## History

The British Isles are made up of two independent countries—the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland occupies all but the northern part of the island of Ireland. The United Kingdom is often referred to as just Great Britain or even Britain. It includes four political regions—England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Great Britain can be divided into two physical regions, lowland Britain and highland Britain. Most of

England, except the far north, is part of lowland Britain. Northern England, Wales, and Scotland make up highland Britain.

Lowland Britain has developed a complex cultural geography. About 5,000 years ago, the earliest settlers left their mark with monuments like Stonehenge. Later the Celts—the ancestors of the Scots, Welsh, and Irish—occupied the island. Then the Romans came and built fortified towns. Later, Angles and Saxons, two Germanic tribes, came and drove the Celtic peoples to highland Britain. Vikings from Scandinavia raided the coastal areas and also built settlements. In 1066 William of Normandy conquered England. Normandy is now part of France. Each of these peoples left an imprint on lowland Britain. This process of settlement by successive groups of people, each group creating a distinctive cultural landscape, is called **sequent occupation**.

### The British Empire, 1920



**INTERPRETING THE MAP** The British Empire was a worldwide system of territories and dependencies administered by the British government. Areas within the empire had different levels of self-government, and by

1920, colonies such as Canada, South Africa, and Australia largely managed their own affairs. **What geographic factors might help explain how Britain was able to control such a large empire?**

**The British Empire** In the 1600s and 1700s, British explorers and settlers founded colonies around the world. By 1801 England had brought Ireland, Scotland, and Wales into the United Kingdom. The surrounding ocean helped protect this kingdom. The British also built a powerful navy to take further advantage of the sea. During the 1800s more than one fourth of the world's land was ruled by the British Empire. The empire's colonies provided raw materials for British industries. The colonies also served as markets for finished goods. The empire spread the English language, Christianity, British law, sports, and other British customs around the globe.

The colonies that became the United States were part of the British Empire when they declared independence in 1776. Over time, most parts of the empire gained independence. Most former colonies became members of the Commonwealth of Nations. They still meet to discuss economic, business, and scientific matters of common concern.

Ireland did not win independence from the British until 1921. Before independence, life had long been hard for many Irish. Then in the mid-1800s Ireland suffered from a potato **famine**. A famine is a widespread shortage of food that may lead to severe hunger and starvation. About 1 million Irish died when the potato crop failed for several years in a row. The famine, poverty, and a lack of economic opportunities led many Irish to immigrate to other countries. Many migrated to the United States. (See the map.)

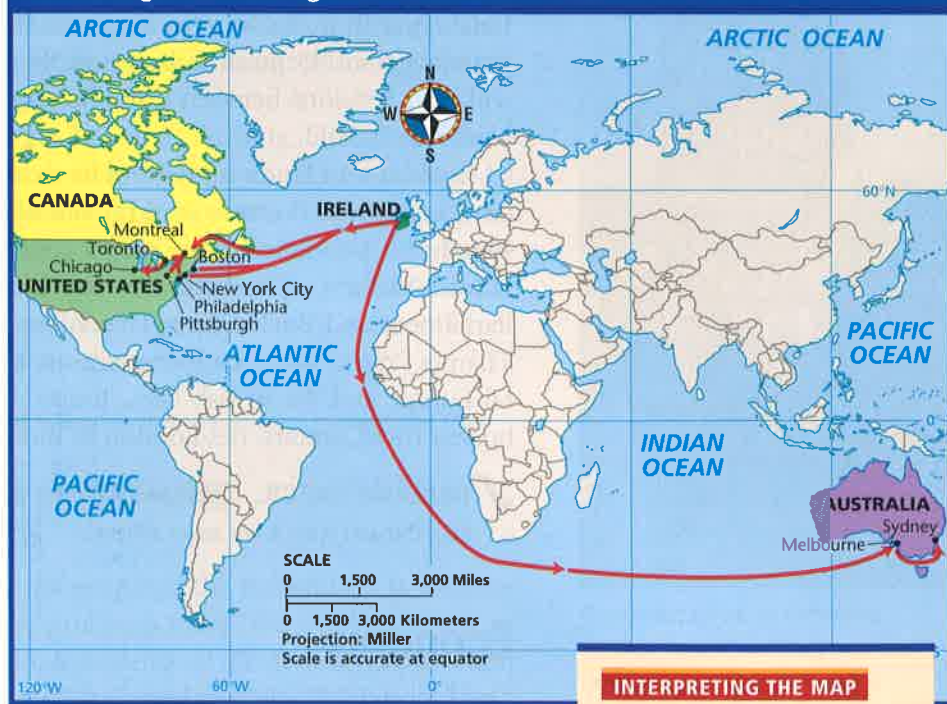
**READING CHECK:** *Environment and Society* Why did many people emigrate from Ireland during the mid-1800s?

## Culture

Because of their shared history, Ireland and Great Britain share many cultural features. Social life is often centered around local eateries. Sports such as soccer, rugby, and cricket are popular. In addition, English is the main language of both countries. However, a small number of Irish also speak Irish Gaelic, and some Scots speak Scottish Gaelic.

The countries also differ in important ways. Both Ireland and Britain are democracies. However, their governments are organized differently. Ireland is a republic, and the president is the head of state. Britain is a **constitutional monarchy**. That is, a king or queen is the head of state, but a parliament led by a prime minister serves as the lawmaking branch of government.

### Irish Emigration during the Great Potato Famine



#### INTERPRETING THE MAP

Ireland's Great Potato Famine dramatically changed the country's population pattern as more than 1 million Irish immigrated to North America, Britain, and Australia. **What geographic factors, both physical and cultural, might explain the migration patterns shown on the map?**

#### Internet connect

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**FOR:** Web sites about northern and western Europe

Another important difference is religion. The vast majority of people in Ireland are Roman Catholic. However, Protestants make up a majority of the population in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. As you will read, tensions between Catholics and Protestants have led to violence in Northern Ireland.

Dublin is Ireland's capital and its most populous city. London is the largest city, the cultural center, a world financial center, and the capital of the United Kingdom. Both cities are home to government buildings and famous landmarks. Visitors to London can see historic buildings like the Houses of Parliament and Buckingham Palace. For centuries, London's location on the Thames (TEMZ) River made that city an ideal port for trade between continental Europe and the British Isles. Today Heathrow Airport, one of the world's busiest travel centers, ties London to thousands of cities around the globe.



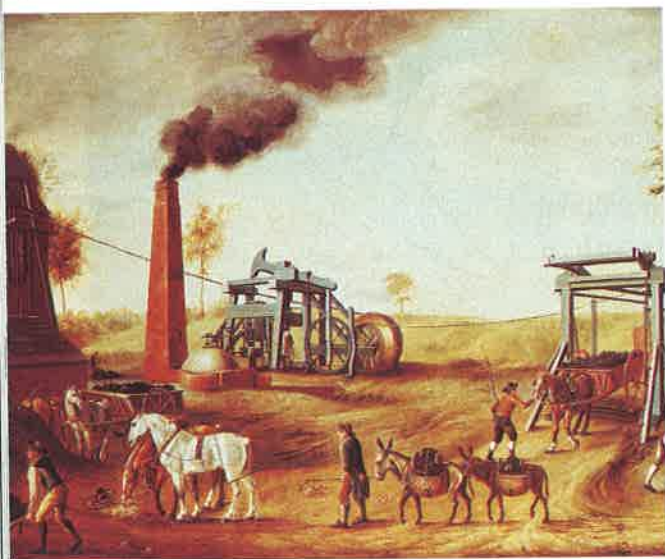
**READING CHECK: Human Systems** What are some cultural features that Britain and Ireland share? What is one major difference?

## Economy

The Industrial Revolution began in Britain. By the 1700s the country had developed coal and iron mining and a large labor force. Britain also built a good transportation network that used rivers and canals. By the early 1800s the British had built the world's first railroads. Later in the century, London built the first subway system. (See Geography for Life: The London Underground and Mass Transit.) All of these features aided industrial development.

### INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

*This painting from the late 1700s shows a steam engine being used to dig a coal mine and represents the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in England. How are people in this painting using technology to modify the physical environment?*



**Industrial Rise and Decline** Britain's early industries included iron and steel, shipbuilding, and textiles. Innovations such as spinning machines and steam power revolutionized how fabrics were produced. Wool and cotton from British colonies as well as from the United States supplied the textile industry. Industrial growth spread from London and central England to southern Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh became industrial centers. Trade of raw and finished products between Britain and its colonies further aided development.

Throughout much of the 1700s and 1800s, Britain dominated global trade. (See Case Study: Global Trade.) By 1900, however, the British had lost their dominance to foreign competition. By the mid-1900s Britain's coal mines and traditional industries were in rapid decline. British industries suffered because many were inefficient and because their products were not in demand. In the years after World War II, the United Kingdom **nationalized** many industries to try to stop the decline. Nationalized industries are those that are owned and operated by the government. They are protected from domestic competition.

**Changing Fortunes** Today Britain has returned most industry to private ownership, and the British economy is strong. Many early industrial cities, such as Glasgow and Birmingham, have benefited from urban renewal. They have also attracted

high-tech industries. Although the coal industry has declined, oil and gas wells in the North Sea have helped the economy. In addition, much of Britain's labor force works in service industries rather than manufacturing. Tourism is also an important industry.

The Irish economy traditionally was based on farming. However, Ireland now has one of Europe's most rapidly developing economies. Low taxes and a well-educated workforce have attracted foreign companies. They use the country as a door to other European markets. The main industries are now banking, computers, electronics, and food processing. Immigrants from other countries are moving to Ireland to get jobs. This situation is quite different from the past, when Irish emigrated from their poor country.

**READING CHECK:** *Human Systems* How has Ireland's economy changed over time?

## Issues and Challenges

One of the greatest challenges facing the people of the British Isles is violence in Northern Ireland. The Irish call the problems there "the troubles." Most of the people in Northern Ireland are descendents of Protestant English and Scottish settlers. A large minority are Irish Catholic. Many Catholics believe that union with the Republic of Ireland would protect them from discrimination in employment, housing, and government. However, Protestants want to stay part of the mostly Protestant United Kingdom.

The disagreement between the two groups has led to violence, particularly in the city of Belfast. British troops have tried to keep the peace. However, terrorist groups from both sides have killed thousands of people. A 1998 agreement created a shared government between Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland. However, the future of this arrangement is not clear.

**READING CHECK:** *Human Systems* How do Roman Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland view their region differently?



*Orangemen parade in Portadown, Northern Ireland. The Orangemen are members of the Orange Society, a Protestant organization formed in 1795 to try to maintain Protestant control in Northern Ireland. In recent years, Orangemen parades in the region have led to street violence between Protestants and Catholics.*



## Review

### Define

sequent occupance, famine, constitutional monarchy, nationalized

### Working with Sketch Maps

On a map of northern and western Europe that you draw or that your teacher provides, label the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, British Isles, England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Dublin, London, Thames River, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham, and Belfast. In the margin of your map, identify the capital of the United Kingdom.

### Reading for the Main Idea

- Human Systems** How has London's location affected its growth?
- Human Systems** How have cultural differences led to the division of Ireland?
- Human Systems** How did Great Britain's history as a naval power contribute to the diffusion of cultural traits? How did innovation in Britain spur the Industrial Revolution?

### Critical Thinking

- Analyzing Information** What geographical factor has influenced Britain's power to control territory around the world? How do you think that factor has influenced Britain's role in foreign affairs?

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### Organizing What You Know

- Create a chart like the one below. Use it to list differences between Britain's old industrial economy and its modern economy. Write a paragraph describing how Britain's economy has changed over the past 200 years.

Britain's old industrial economy	Britain's modern economy